



This is my last editorial for the year and once again I am reflecting on the year past. There has been much work done by Carers NSW and I am not only satisfied but also proud of what we have achieved. You can find those achievements in our Annual Report, or visit our sparkling new website to read of the diverse programs we have delivered, research we have informed and government policy making we have influenced.

Of course there have been highlights. Our carer survey was the most outstanding we have completed (nearly 2,000 responses!) and has provided us with very rich data to ensure we have a strong evidence base when we speak on your behalf. You can read about the survey in this edition of *Carers News*.

We have seen the beginning of the implementation of the *Carers (Recognition) Act 2010*, with NSW Health building carer health assessments into their work with carers, and both NSW Health and Aging, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) working hard to ensure the Carers' Charter is reflected in all policy and services.

On a personal note, this year there have been, as always, conversations with carers, and stories told by carers that have amazed and inspired me. These conversations and stories have had me thinking a lot about hope.

I think particularly of the carers I had lunch with during a Carers' Week harbour cruise who shared with me what hope means to them and how without hope their lives would be meaningless. I had been invited to this lunch to talk about the importance of hope but the invitation came at a time in my own life when I was feeling overwhelmed so I felt I had little to give. On the day I certainly didn't have much hope to share! While preparing for this talk I had looked for inspiration in the work of writers, great statesmen and others and found some words that rang true, (do you remember the 'warrior mother' I wrote about in a previous edition of *Carers News*? I thought of her when I read this quote from Sophia Mendoza, Master Sergeant, US Army, **'I have the greatest weapon, I have hope'**) but none seemed just right. I needn't have worried, those wonderful carers had more than enough hope and wisdom for all of us. They told stories of hope vindicated and of hope regenerated through sharing, with other carers, those hopeless moments we all experience. I was not only inspired, I relearned the importance of hope.

On the systemic level there is hope to be found in the ongoing conversation about the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the increasing awareness by all governments in Australia of the contribution made by carers to their own families and the nation at large. This has been demonstrated, for example, by increased funding for families of children with disabilities.

Despite the increase in funding for *Better Start for Children with Disabilities* I know many of our carers have some concerns about the new person centred approach (PCA) to disability services. The NSW Government is introducing this new approach to support people with a disability, their families and carers to enable the individual to choose what

services and support options best meet their needs, and then negotiate how, when and by whom they are provided. PCA will be accompanied by the introduction of individualised funding.

Carers NSW supports the principles and direction of PCA and individualised funding. We look forward to working with government, the disability sector and service providers to support its introduction, and to ensure people with disability, their carers and families are informed of their options and are fully able to participate. We are also working to ensure the reforms result in improved independence, health and wellbeing for all parties, without added complexity, stress or financial burden.

We will keep you up to date as more detail becomes available.

At Carers NSW we end the year with hope for 2013. This is a certain hope grounded in the knowledge that the work we do really does make a difference in carers' lives, that government is listening to us and acting on our advice, and that there is real respect for what we have to say.

I want to thank all those carers who have written, emailed, chatted, and cheered me this past year. I want to acknowledge the extraordinary work done by our staff and volunteers. My thanks also to your Board, a diverse group of people united by their commitment to carers and their determination to improve their lives.

I wish you all a safe, peaceful and happy Christmas and may you begin the New Year with hope.

Laraine Toms  
President, Carers NSW